

**EDUCATION COMMITTEE PUBLIC HEARING**  
**H.B. 5465, AN ACT INCREASING EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATOR SALARIES AND**  
**EXPANDING CHILD CARE**  
**OPPORTUNITIES FOR FAMILIES**  
**S.B. 1, AN ACT CONCERNING CHILDHOOD MENTAL AND PHYSICAL HEALTH**  
**SERVICES IN SCHOOLS**  
**MONDAY, MARCH 21, 2022**

Dear Representative Sanchez, Senator McCrory, Senator Berthel, Representative McCarty and members of the Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB 5465, An Act Increasing Early Childhood Educator Salaries and Expanding Child Care Opportunities for Families and SB 1, An Act Concerning Childhood Mental and Physical Health Services in Schools.

My name is Doug Nakashima and I am the Chief Operating Officer of the Greater Hartford YMCA.

During the past 20 years YMCA childcare centers have received one rate increase of three percent for Care4Kids and School Readiness. During that same time, the minimum wage has increased by over 50% and inflation has risen by almost 50% as well.

- The fact is that Care4Kids provider payments are at the 50th percentile of the market rate for infants and toddlers and only the 25th percentile for preschool while the federal government recommends paying at the 75th percentile of the market rate.
- Our Y childcare centers continue to face increased costs, especially with the minimum wage increasing this year. We are unable to charge parents more, nor can we reduce staff or staff hours. This is because of laws and regulations instituted by the State of Connecticut.
- Currently, our childcare center, that accepts Care4Kids, are reimbursed at the 50th percentile of the market rate for infant and toddlers, while we are only reimbursed at the 25<sup>th</sup> percentile of the market rate for preschool children. The federal government, which also funds the Care4Kids program, recommends payment rates should be at the 75th percentile market rate.

The state of Connecticut needs to realize that early childcare educators are professionals that should be paid in a manner that reflects the importance of

their profession. These professionals are helping our future students learn and grow in an environment that will prepare them for success in K-12 schools and we need to place a public value on these positions. During these difficult times we simply can't ask parents to pay more for their childcare. We need the state of Connecticut to support early childcare educators professionals. Our YMCAs have closed classrooms across the state because of our inability to find qualified early childhood educators.

Quality childcare is a necessity if our state's economy is to return to pre-pandemic levels. Childcare is already unaffordable and without a meaningful increase in reimbursement rates, the state will be making the children care system significantly more expensive. It is imperative that our childcare centers receive a rate increase so that we can continue to provide safe and quality childcare to Connecticut's children.

Respectfully,

Doug Nakashima  
Chief Operating Officer  
YMCA of Greater Hartford